

# Reigate and Banstead Borough Council

Meeting of Council 2 December 2021

## Questions by Members

	<b>Question by</b>	<b>To be answered by</b>	<b>Subject</b>
1	Cllr Sinden	Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Resources, Cllr Lewanski	Electric Car Charging Points
2	Cllr Essex	Executive Member for Housing and Support, Cllr Neame	Household Support Grant
3	Cllr Stevens	Executive Member for Leisure and Culture, Cllr Sachdeva	The Harlequin
4	Cllr Chandler	Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, Cllr Bramhall	New Pond Farm
5	Cllr Chandler	Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, Cllr Bramhall	Allotments at New Pond Farm <i>(to be answered in writing)</i>
6	Cllr McKenna	Executive Member for Planning Policy and Place Delivery, Cllr Biggs	Marketfield Way
7	Cllr Ritter	Executive Member for Planning Policy and Place Delivery, Cllr Biggs	Job Creation from New Developments

**Councillor Sinden** asked the **Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Resources, Cllr Lewanski** the following question:

**Question 1: Electric Car Charging Points**

Please can you provide details of the accessibility of the borough's current electric car charging points to those with disability, including those in council car parks, and overall plans for increasing charging points in the future?

**Response:**

The Council currently has 15 EV charging points on land it owns, of which 7 are publicly available. This number is soon to increase, with 6 additional charging points currently being installed in Banstead High Street Car Park. Our existing electric vehicle charge points have similar accessibility to a typical fuel pump at a petrol forecourt.

The council's Sustainability Team is currently undertaking work to identify priority sites for installing new electric charging points on council land and ways to encourage business and landowners to provide their own for use by their staff and customers. Accessibility as well as the proximity to residential streets without off-street parking are also key factors when considering new sites for chargers.

**Supplementary Question:**

Do you have any plans for the Red Hill area?

**Response:**

What we're doing currently is exploring different models for different parts of the borough and at this stage is probably too early to say at what parts of the borough. As I said in Banstead High Street we're currently installing another six electrical vehicle charging points, so once that is rolled out we all be coming round to Redhill and to other parts of the Borough as well.

**Councillor Essex** asked the **Executive Member for Housing and Support, Cllr Neame**, the following question:

**Question 2: Household Support Grant**

The loss of the £20 Universal Credit uplift will have negatively affected around 9,000 people in Reigate and Banstead (source [www.surreyi.org.uk](http://www.surreyi.org.uk)). Instead the government allocated the Household Support Grant to county councils to provide financial support for vulnerable households. Surrey County Council was allocated £2.8 million of this to borough and district councils across Surrey and most of the rest will be used to provide free school meals through the school holidays. Please can you confirm the amount received by Reigate and Banstead and how this is planned to support those most in need, including those with less income due to the cut in Universal Credit.

**Response:**

We have very recently been given just over £382,000 from the £2.8m received by SCC. This is to be distributed under the Household Support Fund. This must be distributed before 31st March 2022 with conditions set by the Department of Work and Pensions.

We looked at this quite carefully and discussed making these funds available to households in need, making sure that these funds are distributed with speed and efficiency, and the following has been approved:

The majority of the fund (£308,000) will be distributed by direct payments and vouchers to vulnerable households within our borough. The list will be generated from families who currently receive support with council tax payments, including those on Universal Credit or low incomes.

£23,000 will be allocated as grants to voluntary and community sectors for food, fuel, clothes and either food or fuel top ups.

£31,000 will be made available as supermarket vouchers for families who contact with Reigate and Banstead on a case-by-case basis, and through our key Voluntary and Community Sector partners.

£20,000 will be made available for housing support and will assist residents to move out of temporary accommodation and to assist those at risk of homelessness due to historic rent arrears.

We are currently working on some of the finer details and may need to move small amounts between streams.

**Supplementary Question**

You said that goes up until the 31st March is it possible to let us know what you understand to be happening beyond that date?

**Response:**

The money has got to be given out before the 31<sup>st</sup> March. The team are working very hard to make sure that we give out as much as we of this money before that. Basically,

we have over 6,000 people in the Borough that now apply for Council Tax support, so out those 6,000 over 2,000 of these are families, people with children, so these are the first cohort that we're looking at to make sure the money goes out them. After that we will be looking at the other 4,000 and we will drill down to find out who needs what and try and get out to them. We're trying to make sure that the money goes out from the week of 13<sup>th</sup> December and go out either as electronic or vouchers wherever possible and most of this would be done through an agent which is used by Surrey County Council. Wherever possible we try not to do it in cash. Unfortunately, we don't keep lists of people who are just on Universal Credit, so there are certain people who will be on Universal Credits but won't have applied for Council Tax subsidies. We have a very strong team within the Council who deal with money support and financial support and we have actually strengthened this team over the last year because of the pandemic and because of what some of our residents have experienced during the pandemic and we would advise all Members that if they have anybody in their ward who is suffering from food or fuel poverty or is struggling financially, to get in touch with our teams who will deal with each one case to case basis.

**Councillor Stevens** asked the **Executive Member for Leisure and Culture, Cllr Sachdeva** the following question:

### **Question 3: The Harlequin**

Almost 20 years ago, the Harlequin theatre hosted regular Metal and Punk gigs under the name of the "Redhill Takeover". These events proved extremely popular and as I recall, nearly always had a full house on the night. It was great for the local economy and also supported many young up and coming acts and attracted well known British acts of the day. For a short while, the Harlequin was almost on a par with other small but very well-known venues on the British touring circuit for the south east, such as the Tunbridge Wells Forum and the Brighton Concord 2.

Whilst the Harlequin still continues to put on successful theatre productions, comedy gigs and tribute acts, I do feel it is a shame that the Harlequin's viable potential as a thriving music venue, as proved from those excellent shows I attended in my teenage years, was ultimately never fully realised. Would the Executive Member look into promoting the Harlequin as a suitable venue for promoters of touring acts? As I feel this can only be a positive move in putting the Harlequin and Redhill on the touring map of this country.

### **Response:**

You have given us a brilliant suggestion being a long standing resident of the borough who certainly has fantastic memories of the Harlequin. The ongoing development of the Harlequin theatre and cinema and its programme is something that I'm fully committed to as an Executive Portfolio Holder.

The development for Reigate and Banstead Borough Council's Leisure and Culture Strategy, which will be published in 2022, looks at all aspects of how we can broaden our offerings and explore opportunities for both our residents and visitors of our borough.

As you will know the transformation of the Waller Studio in late 2019 created a smaller more intimate studio space to work alongside our large auditorium so that with our cinema offering we could provide and produce a home for a wider variety of local and touring acts. Although impacted by the pandemic, the use of all spaces continues to be focused on providing access to high quality programming.

As you note in your question, we run an incredibly varied programme at the moment, including our pantomime season which begins in a little over a week from now, but I will be continuing to strive for the Harlequin theatre and cinema to retain its reputation as an ever developing dynamic arts and cultural venue at the heart of the borough.

Currently there are few live music venues available in the borough and the Council would welcome the opportunity for the Harlequin to be part of that live music regeneration and will be exploring this in more detail. I would welcome your insight into the area of cultural development and hope that you will be happy to work with me on this as part of the Leisure and Culture Strategy development.

**Councillor Chandler** asked the **Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, Cllr Bramhall** the following question:

**Question 4: New Pond Farm**

Having spent a considerable sum of money to understand the flora, fauna and natural environment of the New Pond Farm area and potential improvements (and it would be interesting to know exactly how much), will the council be capitalising upon this position by bringing forward a proposal for its better use and enjoyment by the residents for consultation?

**Response:**

I can confirm that the council is considering a range of options for this site and will be taking into consideration all of the information generated from the recent project as well as feedback from residents across the borough.

**Supplementary question:**

Do you have any notion of the time frame in which proposals may come to fruition?

**Response:**

The time frame is something that I can't give a specific reply to. It is an urgent piece of work that the officers are looking at and as soon as we do have something, we will be bringing that information out to members and to the community.

**Councillor Chandler** asked the **Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, Cllr Bramhall** the following written question:

**Question 5: Allotments at New Pond Farm**

The opportunity to grow your own produce is well recognised as having huge social benefit as well as supporting residents to achieve sustainability and self-reliance. Rising food costs are impacting local families and increasing the use of food banks. New Pond farm allotments have not been let whilst the planning proposal was being considered depriving many of an opportunity. Please can the council confirm the current waiting list for allotments across the borough and that the temporary halt to letting allotments at New Pond Farm is now being reviewed and vacant plots now offered to residents who have been waiting patiently on the waiting list?

**Written response:**

We understand and appreciate the importance of our allotments, and the part they play in the lives of our residents, particularly in respect of the opportunities they provide, such as food production and wellbeing.

We currently have 1200 allotment plots, which are a mixture of sizes – the biggest being 250sqm. Of these 1200, 1105 are tenanted, the balance of unlet plots are unlet for 3 reasons, some being on New Pond Farm or the Paddock, some which have been given up in the last month and cannot be relet during the annual invoicing process and some which are in an area requiring some tree works, prior to letting.

I can confirm that as part of the Council's proposal to develop a crematorium in Woodhatch, the letting of new plots was understandably suspended whilst the planning application was awaiting determination. I can also confirm that further to the application's refusal at Planning Committee, consideration will be given to reviewing the position at an appropriate point.

With regard to the allotment waiting lists, it is important to note that each individual total is not a number exclusive to the corresponding site, as many people appear on multiple site waiting lists. As such, a person on multiple waiting lists being allocated a plot on one site will result in the waiting list numbers reducing at a number of sites.

With the aforementioned point in mind, the waiting list numbers for of the sites are as follows:

Batts Hill - 71

Brambletye Park Road - 61

Colesmead Road - 49

Highlands - 75

Holly Lane - 54

Lakers Rise - 23

Lambert Road - 37

Maple Road - 15

Merland Rise - 35

Merstham - 43

New Pond Farm - 57

Park Lane - 56  
Park Lane East - 40  
Park Lane Extension - 6  
Parsonsfield Road - 33  
Partridge Mead - 25  
Princes Road - 69  
Redstone Hill – 37  
Riding School - 33  
Smithy Lane - 27  
Tattenham Way - 69  
The Paddock - 35  
The Park – 14  
Wiggie Lane – 81



**Councillor Ritter on Councillor McKenna's behalf** asked the **Executive Member for Planning Policy and Place Delivery, Cllr Biggs** the following question:

**Question 6: Marketfield Way**

At a time when the Council is failing to deliver a decent amount of social housing to those of our residents in need, isn't it right that we scrutinise ever more carefully the decisions this Council has made on housing. The Council's flagship mixed residential and commercial scheme at Marketfield Way in the town centre includes 150 luxury flats with concierge service, gym and other features all pre-sold to private rented specialist Kookie, with no social housing at all, on this publicly owned site. Taking into account this forward sale, plus the fact the Council is left with a lot of high value retail/leisure space in the town centre, and most importantly subsidy to the Council of £2m grant from Coast to Capital LEP can the Council advise us of the impact of all this good news on viability of the scheme in terms of surplus over and above the normal developers return (Usually 15% profit on cost) and what this would equate to in affordable housing units if we were considering the scheme today?

**Response:**

As you will know the Reigate and Banstead 5 Year Plan provides a clear commitment that this Council will "secure the delivery of homes that can be afforded by local people and which provide a wider choice of tenure, type and size."

I am pleased to say we are making good progress in helping to bring forward new homes within our Borough and it is not correct to state that the Council is failing to deliver a decent amount of social housing.

Our Core Strategy, which had cross party support when reviewed in 2019, sets out that we will deliver 1,500 new affordable homes between 2012 and 2027, which equates to 100 additional homes per year.

In the nine years since the publication of the Core Strategy 918 new affordable homes have been delivered in our Borough, so in fact, we are not failing, we are currently exceeding the target that was agreed.

In relation to Marketfield Way, it was unfortunately not viable to provide affordable homes as part of this scheme, which was demonstrated through the planning application process.

Indeed while I agree that it is very good news that the Council has entered into a pre-sale agreement with Kookie to purchase the residential units and we have secured external grant funding, unfortunately it still remains not viable for us to deliver affordable homes as part of this particular scheme.

However, it is also important to note that the fundamental driver for our Marketfield Way scheme was always about placemaking, providing an evening economy and helping to regenerate the town centre.

Marketfield Way is helping the Council to deliver another of our key priorities which is to help revitalise our town centres and in Redhill it contributes to realising our vision to make the town the cultural and leisure hub within our Borough.

For the reasons that I have explained while it is not possible to provide affordable homes on the Marketfield Way site, this Council is actively developing our own land holdings to provide housing and we are delivering a minimum of 30% affordable homes, in line with our Five year plan's commitment.

We have already delivered housing on some of our own sites and are working towards delivering a mix of tenures and opportunities on other sites.

Already this year we have completed a 25 unit scheme in Tadworth. Of the 25 homes built by the Council, 11 houses are for shared ownership through Raven Homes and 14 houses and flats are being sold on the open market, with some new homeowners eligible for the Help to Buy Scheme to discount the cost.

This year we will also complete 32 one and two bedroom flats at Cromwell Road in Redhill, many of which we anticipate will be available to rent to local people on the housing register at below market rent.

In addition, we have commenced work on four one-bedroom bungalows in Lee Street, Horley to help homeless single people.

The Council will continue using our own assets to bring forward new affordable homes, and we will work with our partners, such as Registered Providers and developers to bring forward a mix of homes that meet local needs.

**Councillor Ritter** asked the **Executive Member for Planning Policy and Place Delivery, Cllr Biggs** the following question:

**Question 7: Job Creation from New Developments**

Policy EMP5 in Reigate and Banstead Borough Council's Development management plan (DMP) states that this council will seek to secure a minimum of 20% of total jobs created by the construction of new development (of 25 or more homes) for local residents or apprenticeships. Opportunities for training and placement schemes targeted at local residents in respect of any jobs created through the end use of any non-residential development will also be explored. In light of this, could the Executive Member for Planning Policy and Place Delivery please give an update on what percentage of jobs have been created in this way for local residents, since the start of the plan, what percentage of new developments have been assessed on this requirement, and whether the training and placement opportunities being explored include developing the skills needed for retrofitting homes in the Borough or other 'Green' jobs.

**Response:**

In accordance with the Policy, all new developments of 25 homes or more have been required to meet the requirement to include a minimum of 20% of the construction jobs for local residents or apprenticeships.

Given the DMP was adopted in September 2019 we've had just over 2 years whereby proposals have been assessed against the policy and, unfortunately, there have only been very few applications approved for over 25 units in that time.

Of those, only a couple have reached the point of construction whereby the details of local construction jobs and apprenticeships have been required and submitted and I will provide those to you in written form if you'd like to see them.

For this reason though and given we have no way of knowing the total construction jobs created in that period, it is impossible to advise of this as a percentage but we will be seeking other ways of monitoring the effectiveness of this policy going forward once we have built up a more significant number of major applications.

The second aspect of the policy requires exploration of the potential for local training schemes as part of the operational use of new developments. For residential schemes the operational use doesn't create jobs and rather this aspect relates to employment generating developments. For example, such a requirement was agreed with Sainsburys as part of their new store in Redhill and for the Council's own developments we are always keen to ensure that priority is given to local employment and local training wherever possible.

**Supplementary question:**

Could let us know when this will be reported on and will there be an ongoing feed back to us as Members please?

**Response:**

Indeed, we will make sure that reporting is shared with members.